

year can be the year that we finally pass campaign finance reform.

NOTE: This statement was read at the Project Independence rally for campaign finance reform at Faneuil Hall in Boston, MA.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and an Exchange With Reporters March 26, 1997

President Clinton. Let me say that it's a real pleasure for me to welcome President Izetbegovic back to the White House. I'm looking forward to this meeting and to getting an update on his efforts to complete the implementation of the Dayton accord. The United States remains committed to that and committed to supporting those in Bosnia who are working for that.

And we still have an awful lot of work to do in the time remaining for our mission there on the security front, and then even beyond there will be a lot more to do. So I'm pleased to have him here, and I'm looking forward to our visit.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, why did you send Dennis Ross to the Middle East?

President Clinton. Because I'm concerned about the peace process, and we have been talking among ourselves here intensely over the last several days about whether there are some ideas we ought to advance with the Israelis and the Palestinians, and particularly what we can do to minimize the violence and to get the negotiations back going. So that's what—Dennis' trip is the product of our deliberations here, and we'll see what it produces.

Q. What are you suggesting?

FBI and Alleged Chinese Efforts To Influence the 1996 Election

Q. Mr. President, we never had a chance to ask you yesterday about your response to the possibility that FBI Director Louis Freeh withheld information that you might actually have needed to conduct policy. I was wondering if you have a response to that and what you're doing, if anything, to look into whether that actually occurred.

President Clinton. Well, first of all, obviously I have no way of knowing—you don't know what

you don't get. But if you look at the last several years, or just the last couple of years, we have worked with the FBI in areas that have both national security implications and the question of a crime that violates the criminal laws of the United States. The two most obvious and most recent cases are the Khobar Towers and the Atlanta bombing during the Olympics. And we worked with them on both cases.

Now, they have dual obligations to share with the White House and with the State Department—the Secretary of State, where appropriate, information we need to protect and advance national security and to preserve the integrity of criminal investigations. And ultimately, those things almost have to be resolved on a case-by-case basis, where there is a doubt, by the Attorney General.

And I'm confident that that is what has been and will continue to be done in this case. And that's really the best answer I can give you here.

Q. Do you still have strong confidence in Louis Freeh to run the FBI?

President Clinton. Yes, I have no basis—on the basis of this incident, I don't have any information at this time which would call into question that confidence. These are not always easy questions. And that's why the Attorney General has to resolve them when there is a real doubt. I just wanted—I wanted to make sure that the national security interests of the country have been fully taken into account and that there's really been an honest effort to look at all the evidence and to resolve it.

I can't say that—to go back to your original question, since I don't know what was not given, I can't make a judgment about it.

Q. Well, why—

President Clinton. But I do know that the Attorney General was sensitive to it, and I believe will continue to make an effort to resolve the matters in the appropriate way.

Q. But there seems to be a—Mr. President, there seems to be a disconnect with what you get. I mean, it seems to me that they are not telling you a lot of things that you should know.

President Clinton. Well, I'm concerned about that, as I said, but the only way we have of resolving that is through the Attorney General. And again, I've seen these suggestions in the press, but I don't know what the facts are. I think everyone understands that there are significant national security issues at stake here and that the White House, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of State, as well as the President, need to know when the national security issues are brought into play.

And I have no reason—I have no evidence on which I could say that, that we have not been able to get the information we need. I know what I read in the press story, and I know that we have raised it with the Attorney General, and I believe that she will do the best she can to make the right decision.

Vice President's Visit to China

Q. Mr. President, have you talked to Vice President Gore since he's been in China, sir?

President Clinton. I haven't talked to him because of—I think he hasn't wanted to bother me because of my knee and the time differences, but I've gotten daily reports at least once and sometimes more than once a day on the Vice President's trip. And so far, I'm quite pleased with what I hear and what I have seen.

And I've obviously gotten my daily reports and sometimes more on the First Lady's trip. And I'm quite pleased by what I have seen there as well.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Would you consider another emergency summit with the Mideast leaders?

President Clinton. I don't want to comment anymore about anything I would consider on the Middle East until I hear back from Mr. Ross. He has very explicit instructions that he is implementing as a result of our meeting on this. And I want to see what happens as a result of that.

But I'm concerned about it. I think everybody in the world who's worked for peace in the Middle East is concerned about it. We're all going to put our heads together and do the best we can.

One more Bosnia question, yes.

Bosnian Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, the peace process seems to be in trouble in Bosnia. Could you comment on that?

President Clinton. Well, I'm going to talk to the President about what we can do to push it along. It's obviously going to take an effort on behalf of all parties. But the things that we knew from the beginning would be difficult, have been difficult. The resettlement issues, the return issues have been difficult.

But I think it's important not to lose sight of what has been done and not to lose sight of the fact that there will be an international security presence there for quite some time yet, during which time we have to work hard to do as much as we possibly can to implement the Dayton agreement. And that's going to be my commitment and what I look forward to discussing with President Izetbegovic.

Q. But you fully still expect U.S. troops to be out by June '98 as scheduled?

President Clinton. I do. I think that in the—I think we all understood that we couldn't have an international security presence in a country forever. But on the other hand, I think we have to—we shouldn't focus so much on that now, as I have pleaded with everyone. We should focus on what's going to happen tomorrow and next week and next month and between now and the end of this year and in the months in 1998 that we have. We have—there is a lot of very specific work to be done that, if done and done right, will make it possible for the nation to succeed and for the people to be brought back into a more constructive cooperation and existence when we're gone.

Q. How does the President of Bosnia—do you feel that way too? Do you feel hopeful?

President Izetbegovic. Yes, I hope. First, I have to thank Mr. President for receiving me twice because of his leg.

And we have some problems with the process of the Dayton—implementation of Dayton, especially civil part of it is going slowly. And the implementation operation also is going slowly. We know that it is—that is—all that is our job firstly, primarily our job, but we need help of the States to push on the—and I am going to talk about this problem with Mr. President.

Q. Do you think your country will be ready in a year and a half to exist on its own?

President Izetbegovic. I believe yes on condition—maybe on four conditions: If civil part of the Dayton agreement would be implemented, first; secondly, equip and train program also would be implemented; then, if—protocol about disarmament would be done; and an additional condition, maybe if Bosnia would be received in the Partnership of Peace. That's—on these four conditions, I believe that SFOR forces or foreign forces can leave Bosnia without big problems.

President Clinton. Thank you all.

President Izetbegovic. Some problems, maybe, but——

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:29 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, President Clinton referred to Ambassador Dennis B. Ross, Special Middle East Coordinator. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry

March 26, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you, Secretary Shalala, Acting Secretary Metzler. Thank you both for the work you've done on this. I thank the Commission members for their willingness to serve, those who are here and a few who could not be here with us today. And I thank all of you here in this audience for your interest in this profoundly important matter.

The Advisory Commission that I announced today will help to chart our way through a time of profound change in health care. Their task will be focused and urgent: to find ways to ensure quality and to ensure that the rights of consumers in health care are protected.

Since I took office, we have been committed to improving our health care system, to making it more affordable, more accessible, while preserving its high quality. You have heard Secretary Shalala mention some of the things we have done together. We've worked with States to expand Medicaid to more than 2 million Americans who previously had no insurance. We reached across party lines to enact the Kassebaum-Kennedy law that provides that working families will not lose their insurance when they change jobs, increased the health care tax deduction for 3 million self-employed Americans. And now in our budget plan, we have funds sufficiently targeted to extend coverage to as many as half of our 10 million American children who still don't have medical coverage.

We've worked to constrain costs. Just yesterday, I announced a new effort to combat the multibillion dollar problem of fraud and abuse

in Medicare and Medicaid. Our balanced budget proposal also strengthens Medicare through savings and overdue structural reforms.

Of course, we're not alone in this. The private sector has found ways to rein in costs, sometimes dramatically. And in many cases, changes in the health care delivery system have, frankly, also improved its quality. For example, the growing recognition of the value of preventive care, such as mammography screening, is saving and extending lives and the quality of life. This is all very encouraging. Step by step we have been working to expand access to health care, and today we take the next step.

In this time of transition, many Americans worry that lower costs mean lower quality and less attention to their rights. On balance, however, managed health care plans, HMO's, PPO's, and others, give patients good care and greater choice at lower cost. Still, we must make sure that these changes do not keep health professionals from offering the best and the most medically appropriate services to their patients. Managed care managed well can be the best deal for our families. Whether they have traditional health care or managed care, none of our people should ever have inferior care.

I am proud that the Medicare and Medicaid programs have taken the lead in responding to the quality concerns of both patients and health care providers, as Secretary Shalala has just described. But we're learning the defining, measuring, and enforcing quality is far from a simple task. There are many complicated issues. They